

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Answers From The
Department of Social & Health Services'
Medical Assistance Administration

Broker Changes In Snohomish County

For
**Non-Emergent Medical Transportation (NEMT) &
Interpreter Services (IS)**

October 28, 2004

What's This About?

- On July 1, 2004 DSHS/MAA changed Brokers in Snohomish County.
- Brokers arrange and pay for trips for qualifying DSHS/MAA clients.
- Brokers also arrange and pay for interpreter services events for "requesters" (DSHS staff and MAA medical providers).
- Brokers take phone calls from clients and requesters. Brokers authorize and deny trips and interpreter events. Brokers decide what kind of transport a client gets: transit (bus), gas vouchers, taxi, van, individual or grouped ride. Brokers decide who will provide transport and what agency will provide interpreting.
- Brokering is funded by Medicaid. Medicaid money can only be used for Medicaid services. Federal rules and laws require that the least amount of Medicaid money be used to get the job done.
- MAA Brokers arrange for transport and interpreting so clients can get medical care paid by Medicaid.

Why Did The Brokers Change? I liked the last one.

- Federal Medicaid rules require DSHS/MAA to spend the least amount of money to get the job done. DSHS needs to make certain that its clients' safety and health needs are met by getting clients to necessary medical appointments, and by providing interpreters to the medical providers once the client is there. The Brokers must do all of this at once.
- MAA reviews the Brokers and what they do. This includes giving other companies a chance to show that they can be Brokers that spend less money and provide better access to services.
- MAA announced a "Solicitation" (request for bids) on December 29, 2003 so that it could see if others could be better Brokers. Many bidders responded.
- Experts at four different Washington State agencies reviewed the bids and scored them. The scores were added up and Paratransit Services won the bid for Snohomish County by a large margin.
- Paratransit Services became the new DSHS/MAA Broker for Snohomish County on July 1, 2004. The previous Broker (Snohomish County Human Services) cooperated with MAA and Paratransit Services to help make sure clients and requesters get services.

I Am Waiting A Long Time On The Broker Phone. What is wrong?

Every Broker must have enough toll-free phone lines and call-taker staff to answer 80% of all client calls within three minutes. All Brokers also have FAX machines so that medical providers can send in ride and interpreter requests without waiting on the phone.

You will get faster service if, after calling Paratransit Services at 1-877-852-2580, you listen to their messages and then make a choice by pressing the extension you need.

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- **Client Transportation?** Call 1-877-852-2580, then press **741 for rides**. Be ready to share information about your medical program, how far you can walk, if you have access to a car, and other information the Broker needs.
 - **Clients:** Do not “0 Out” (**do NOT press zero for Operator**). The Operator can only put you back in the phone lines at the very end.
 - **Clients’ first calls may take a while.** Paratransit Services is required to make new records for you, so they have to ask a lot of questions. After a while the calls will go quicker and everyone calling will be waiting less.
 - **Canceling a ride?** Call 1-877-852-2580, then press **742 to cancel a ride**.
 - **Return Rides?** Return rides should be prescheduled when a client’s ride is scheduled.
 - It is better if you **preschedule your return ride** when you schedule your ride. That way your return ride can be more timely. If you have been waiting more than 30 minutes for your return ride or need to change your return time, call 1-877-852-2580 then press **746 to get or change your estimated return pick-up time**.
 - If you request a **will-call return (“I’m ready now”)**, you must call Paratransit Services so they can arrange the ride with an available provider. You might have to wait quite a while for an available provider. Call 1-877-852-2580, then press **742 for your return ride**.
 - **Providers Helping Clients Get Transportation?** FAX requests to 360-377-1528. Paratransit Services has a special form for you to use. Call 877-852-2580 then press **743 to get that form**.
 - **Requesters Needing Interpreter Services?** Requesters are limited to DSHS staff and MAA-contracted medical providers. Call 877-852-2580 then press **748 for Interpreter Services**, or FAX 360-373-0502. The request form used for Interpreter Services is different: it is the *DSHS 17-123*. Or ask for and use Paratransit Services’ multiple request form.

My Ride Is Late –Or– They Want Me Ready Very Early. Why?

Paratransit Services is asking clients to be ready one hour before their medical appointment for local rides, or an hour and a half for long-distance rides. Paratransit Services is also training local transport providers how to group rides, like the airport shuttles do. Call 1-877-852-2580, then press **746 to report late pick ups** directly to Paratransit Services.

- MAA’s priority is for clients going to medical appointments.
 - Rides for clients returning home from medical appointments are also important.
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- Paratransit Services asks clients to be ready early so that the driver can quickly help them get on the van or taxi and move on to the next appointment. Drivers are not paid for waiting.

- If you request a **will-call return (“I’m ready now”)**, you must call Paratransit Services so they can arrange the ride with an available provider. You might have to wait quite a while for an available provider. Call 1-877-852-2580, then press **742 for your return ride.**

The New Broker Paratransit Services-

- **Wants me to ride with other people, but I used to ride alone.**
- **Won’t let me pick my own transport company or driver.**
- **Wants me to ride the bus!**

Why are they doing this?

Federal and state rules say that the Broker, not anyone else, picks what transport the client will use. This means that the Broker picks: what **kind of transport** including transit (bus), gas vouchers or reimbursement; **individual or group ride**; and also the **company/driver**. Federal and state rules require the Broker to choose the lowest cost method that gets the job done.

- **Group Rides** are extremely common in Washington State for all kinds of state agencies, public and private companies, and Brokers. It’s like the airport shuttles that people ride. The Brokers use group rides because they cost less. They check to see that the rides are safe.
- **Paratransit Services picks the company and driver** because they have the responsibility of choosing the lowest cost that gets the job done. They have to tell federal and state auditors what they did with taxpayer’s Medicaid money and why they spent it the way they did.
 - **Part of the Broker’s job is increasing competition.** Often the best way to get a better price is to ask several transporters if they can do a better job for less money.
 - For the first few months, Paratransit Services sometimes used the company and driver a client is used to. **Paratransit Services is choosing companies and drivers now.**
- **Transit (Bus)** is also extremely common in Washington State for all kinds of people. The Broker can give bus passes to qualified clients which they can use for anything (not just medical appointments) including grocery runs, social and community events, job searches, etc. However, you must have at least one verifiable medical appointment to receive a bus pass. One-third of all DSHS/MAA Broker trips in Washington State are by bus.
 - If a client cannot use transit, Paratransit Services will ask the client’s primary care practitioner (doctor) to document justification using the Broker’s form.
 - **Paratransit Services is moving clients to transit (bus) transport in groups:**
 - Last names starts with A-H: month of August.
 - Last names start with I-R: month of September.
 - Last names start with S-Z: month of October.

The new Broker wants me to go to a “closer provider” or a “local provider,” but I live near the county line and I’ve been going to my own doctor (or dentist or therapist or etc.) for years! Why do I have to try a closer or local provider?

Federal and state rules require that the least amount of money be spent for transporting clients to and from covered medical appointments. A large part of transport costs is distance: longer trips cost more money. So if a Broker pays for a trip that is outside of the local community where the client lives, the Broker must document why the “longer trip” is medically necessary.

- **State rules require that all trips outside of the local community be documented.** While the last Broker may have had documentation for your trips, Paratransit Services is required to have its own documentation. Even five extra miles can cost a lot of money.
 - **Clients and their medical providers will have to answer questions and produce documents to Paratransit Services about why a medical appointment cannot be done in the client's local community.**
 - Paratransit Services will protect this information because of HIPAA.
 - Paratransit Services is a HIPAA Business Associate of DSHS by contract.
 - **Clients may have to try several medical providers in their local community.**
 - Paratransit Services does not have to arrange for transport if a client refuses to go to local/closer medical providers.
 - Clients are still free to see any provider of their choice but transport will not be authorized or paid by the DSHS/MAA Broker.
 - **Paratransit Services is reviewing clients for local/closer providers in groups.**
 - Last names starts with A-H: month of August.
 - Last names start with I-R: month of September.
 - Last names start with S-Z: month of October.

Changes Can Be Hard But This Will Get Better!

DSHS/MAA believes that clients will be well served in the long run by all the changes that Paratransit Services is making. Within a few months all clients will have the same or better access to services at a lower cost to taxpayers.

Clients or medical providers who are having problems need to work them out directly with Paratransit Services first. **Only Paratransit Services can authorize and pay for trips and interpreter events in Snohomish County.** DSHS/MAA staff are not able to arrange or pay for transport or interpreter events. If a client or medical provider has worked with Paratransit Services and is still not satisfied, they can contact DSHS/MAA staff:

By mail:

Transportation & Interpreter Services Section
P.O. Box 45534
Olympia, Washington 98504-5534

By FAX:

1-360-664-0261

By email:

DCSTISSTRANSPORTATION@dshs.wa.gov (Non-Emergent Medical Transport)
DCSTISSINTERPRETER@dshs.wa.gov (Interpreter Services)

Or by toll-free telephone:

1-800-562-3022 (Medical Assistance Customer Service Center)

Clients and providers contacting DSHS/MAA staff should be prepared to share details of what happened including the names of the people they spoke with at Paratransit Services.

DSHS/MAA is committed to providing low cost, safe and reliable access to medical services for its clients through its Transport and Interpreter Services Brokers.